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Sino-Soviet Relations in the Early 1980s

National Intelligence Estimate

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SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS
IN THE EARLY 1980s

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The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of the Estimate:

The Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of State, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Agency.

Also Participating:

The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army

The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy

The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force

The Director of Intelligence, Headquarters, Marine Corps

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CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
KEY JUDGMENTS	1
DISCUSSION	3
I. INTRODUCTION	3
II. THE INTERPLAY OF VARIABLES TO DATE	3
The Chinese Perspective	3
The Border Issue	4
The Soviet Perspective	4
The US Factor	5
The Japanese Factor	6
The Indochina Factor	6
The Afghan Situation	7
The New Forum for Negotiations	8
III. FACTORS OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN CHINESE POLICY ..	8
The Chinese Leadership Consensus and the Impact of De-Maoization	8
The Economic Arena	10
The Two-Front Threat to China	11
The Afghan Factor	11
Chinese Expectations of the United States and the West	12
IV. STATIC AND DYNAMIC FACTORS IN SOVIET POLICY	14
The Economic Relationship	15
The Range of Possible Soviet Military and Border Concessions	15
The Momentum of Present Deployments	16
The Chances of Soviet Military Initiative	17
The Soviet Succession Variable	18
V. PROSPECTS	19

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KEY JUDGMENTS

The probabilities over the next three to five years strongly favor continuity over change in the Sino-Soviet relationship. There is latent dynamism in the relationship but changes, if they come, are likely to be marginal. Nevertheless, there is a possibility—perhaps one chance in 10—of larger changes toward either armed conflict or significant improvement in the relationship.

The future course of the relationship is likely to be influenced more by an evolution in Chinese perceptions and initiatives than by movement on the part of the Soviet Union. The incentives keeping China on its current course are powerful, but the consensus support for present policies, although widespread, does not appear to be universal. Significant changes in Chinese attitudes toward the USSR, if they occur, would likely be a byproduct of a Chinese reassessment of geopolitical factors, particularly the international role of the United States.

The present Soviet leadership, although interested in some amelioration of relations with China, is unlikely to pay an important political price to accomplish this. A successor leadership is likely to take the same view. The Chinese, in turn, also want to limit tensions, but also are unlikely to moderate their very high demands on the USSR. Minor progress in the economic sphere, however, is possible even in the absence of movement on the intractable border issue.

Steady increases in as well as modernization of the Soviet forces opposite China are likely to continue over the next several years, but Moscow does not appear to have either the desire or intention to attack China, and probably would not do so unless severely provoked. The nature of what constitutes provocation in the Soviet mind, however, may be in flux, and this could be a complicating factor in China's assessments of its options.

The situation in Indochina, and in particular current Soviet ties to Hanoi, has added a new dimension to the Sino-Soviet competition and is a further obstacle to resolution of the conflict. The Chinese appear to wish to avoid renewed hostilities on their southern border but have not renounced this option; a situation in which China posed a military threat to Hanoi or to the survival of the Vietnamese regime would be the most plausible trigger for direct Sino-Soviet hostilities.

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The United States is a central factor in the calculations of both Beijing and Moscow. The Chinese view the United States as a source of help in the Four Modernizations, as a facilitator in their increasing intimacy with Japan and Western Europe, and as at least an ambiguous deterrent in Soviet military calculations about China. Thus, both Sino-US economic ties and especially the overall US posture in the international arena are likely to affect Beijing's estimate of its ability to fend off Moscow.

The USSR fears the possibility of growth in the Sino-US security relationship, but Moscow is not likely to offer Washington major inducements to prevent such growth. The Chinese are probably prepared to accommodate a considerable range of US attitudes on the direct security relationship so long as Washington does not significantly compromise important Chinese interests in its dealings with the Soviet Union.

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DISCUSSION

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Sino-Soviet hostility and the worldwide conflict of Chinese and Soviet interests have over the past two decades become one of the major geopolitical factors in international relations. The conflict today intimately affects US interests across a broad spectrum of issues, and those interests are sensitive to any significant changes in Sino-Soviet interaction, whether in the direction of amelioration or of military clashes. There are, of course, a great number of variables involved in this situation—an indication of the complexity of the subject. We believe that, for a variety of reasons discussed in this Estimate, there are new areas of uncertainty and a latent dynamism in the terms of the relationship. We emphasize, however, that the probabilities still strongly favor continuity over change; moreover, we believe that if changes do come, they are much more likely to be marginal than sweeping.

2. Nevertheless, over the next three to five years we foresee some possibility—perhaps one chance in 10—that the interplay of the numerous complex variables involved could produce larger changes, possibly on fairly short notice. Such discontinuities could lead in either direction—toward Sino-Soviet armed conflict or toward significant improvement in the relationship.

II. THE INTERPLAY OF VARIABLES TO DATE

The Chinese Perspective

3. We believe that for a number of reasons elaborated in portions of this Estimate, the course of Sino-Soviet relations in the next few years is likely to be influenced more directly by the evolution of Chinese perceptions and initiatives than by those of the Soviet Union. More than any other single question, it is the longevity of present Chinese policy that is at issue. But whatever the considerations that make for uncertainty, there are powerful compensating and probably overriding reasons to expect Chinese antagonism toward the Soviets to endure.

4. This hostility is the end product of a multitude of experiences and interactions whose effects have accumulated for many years. Racial and national resentments of Russian czarist behavior merge with memo-

ries of the Comintern's mismanagement of the Chinese revolution in the 1920s and 1930s, the Soviet Army's despoiling of Manchurian industry after World War II, and Stalin's extraction of extraterritorial concessions. Superimposed on these are a long list of more recent perceived injuries of the post-Stalin era. Basically, these injuries resulted from the failed expectations of the Sino-Soviet alliance system at a time when the United States was regarded as the main enemy. The Chinese discovered that Moscow subordinated their vital interests to its management of the bipolar relationship between the two superpowers. Contributing to this discovery were Moscow's ambiguous position at the time of the Taiwan Strait crisis of 1958 and a Soviet request that year for certain military rights in China; the reneging in 1959 on promises to furnish China the atomic weapon, followed by Soviet efforts to keep China dependent on the USSR's nuclear shield; what the Chinese remember as the treacherous and devastating large-scale withdrawal of Soviet economic experts from China in 1960; the movement of large Soviet forces to the Chinese border and Mongolia to intimidate China since the middle 1960s; and the use of some of these forces to humiliate China in the firefights of 1969.

5. These memories are given point for present policy by the Chinese sense of being forced today to confront and respond to an ongoing, long-term Soviet effort to "encircle" China in the world and in Asia, in the first place politically but to some extent militarily. The earlier ideological aspect of Chinese differences with Moscow has faded away as Chinese policy has grown more pragmatic, but this has thus far been amply compensated for by Chinese perceptions of a growing Soviet geopolitical threat. Tending to reinforce this view are such phenomena as the Soviet-Cuban military operations in Africa; the attempted subversion of the nonaligned movement toward pro-Soviet ends by the Soviet Union's Cuban ally; the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, on China's western border; the Soviet underwriting of the forcible Vietnamese establishment of suzerainty over Indochina, on China's southern border; the large-scale maneuvers in Mongolia, on China's northern border; and the build-up of Soviet naval forces in the Far East. From the Chinese perspective, the rate of accumulation of such evidence has been accelerating.

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6. Over the last decade, the central aim of Chinese foreign policy has therefore been the effort to build political bulwarks and strategic counterweights throughout the world against the Soviet Union as the one aggressively expansive great power, portrayed and genuinely regarded by China as intent upon increasing its political and military influence and presence everywhere in the world in "hegemonistic" fashion. This main thrust of Chinese policy has been combined in recent years with a prudent awareness of Soviet military superiority and, thus far, by a careful and accurate calibration of Chinese behavior to avoid crossing the threshold that might bring military confrontation.

The Border Issue

7. Also throughout the last decade, mutual intransigence has preserved an impasse in desultory Sino-Soviet negotiations over the disputed border. These negotiations are concerned with long-held grievances which the Chinese were prepared to gloss over in the years when they considered the USSR a friend. The Chinese have more recently felt unwilling to abandon them except upon terms which would constitute Soviet acceptance of a major political defeat on what Beijing regards as a central front in a much broader struggle.

8. The impasse centers on the Chinese demand for a preliminary Soviet military evacuation prior to adjudication of the border of as much as 20,000 square kilometers—territory in the Pamirs and several hundred islands in the Amur and Ussuri Rivers—which the Chinese claim czarist Russia and the Soviet Union have illegally occupied. (Beijing has also in the past insisted that the Soviets formally acknowledge that additional vast stretches of territory obtained by Russia in the 19th century were granted in "unequal treaties.") The demand includes at least one area the Soviets consider vital to their national interests, and which the Chinese know the Soviets will never evacuate: notably, the island of Heixiazi at the confluence of the Amur and Ussuri, adjoining Khabarovsk and the Transiberian Railroad. The Chinese have scornfully refused Soviet offers to sign a nonaggression pact in place of the preliminary pullback, terming this a useless "paper pledge." Thus the impasse over the border is used by China primarily as an instrument of political warfare against the Soviet Union. The matter remains at one and the same time the leading symbol, central issue, and prime hostage of the frozen relationship. In the more than three years since Mao's death, his heirs have been unwilling to modify the substances

of the rigorous negotiating position he has bequeathed them. In fact, they have added to the initial Chinese demands by asserting the Soviets must "pull out" of Mongolia and Vietnam. These demands point to the central Chinese grievance: the continuing buildup of Soviet and Soviet-allied forces on China's northern and southern borders. The question of whether and under what circumstances they will be willing substantially to modify their positions is central to assessing the future of the relationship.

The Soviet Perspective

9. Moscow's ability to deal flexibly with Beijing is reduced by strong perceptions of a growing Chinese threat to key Soviet interests. The Soviets have their own particular historical interpretations and ingrained biases to match those held by the Chinese. On one level, Russian collective memory of two centuries of Mongol subjugation affects Soviet approaches to the China question, both at home and abroad. Looking at the more recent past, Soviet leaders see Chinese hostility as gross betrayal in the face of what they deem Moscow's long record of selfless assistance to China. During Mao's last decade, the Soviets believed that China was an irrational force in world affairs, lacking only the military means to achieve its goal of dominance over Asia. Since 1976, new concerns that the once-awaited "pragmatic" successors to Mao may now succeed in rationalizing China's economic and military policies while remaining implacable foes of the USSR have been evident. Looking toward the mid-1980s, Soviet leaders may be tempted to see a huge, modernizing, nuclear-armed China—especially as it seeks military ties with the United States—as a growing menace to their policies.

10. The Soviet leaders see Chinese implacability as a frustrating burden that has by now grown familiar, and they are inclined by long experience to prefer a prudent pessimism. They have seen their dispute with the Chinese grow for many years under highly varied circumstances, passing undiminished from one policy arena to another despite great changes in Chinese attitudes toward the rest of the world. The Soviets are therefore deeply impressed by the continuity and enduring strength of what they regard as the malevolent nationalist passions confronting them in Beijing. Some optimists among Soviet observers, looking toward the future, see grounds for hope that these Chinese attitudes may eventually abate. But even such optimists assume that, in the best of circumstances, Chinese foreign policy interests and objectives are

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never likely to become harmonious with those of Moscow. At worst, on the other hand, a future military clash remains quite conceivable in Soviet eyes, and particularly so in view of the February-March 1979 Chinese attack on the Soviet Union's Vietnamese ally.

11. Bounded by these perspectives, and confronted by the immediate reality of unyielding Chinese hostility, the first Soviet priority in dealing with China continues to be unrelenting geopolitical combat, the most important aspect of which is the maintenance of superior military force on the border. The Soviets therefore continue to keep ample Soviet military power facing Beijing as the prominent backdrop to any dialogue with the Chinese, to strive as best they can to weaken China's political, economic, and military influence in the world, to lobby everywhere against China's efforts to grow stronger, to constrain China's ability to combine with others against the USSR, and to suborn China's neighbors so as to isolate and outflank Beijing.

12. At the same time, however, the Soviets would like to reduce Chinese hostility. They see their conflict with Beijing as a major negative factor for their position on the world scene, complicating Soviet relationships with both the capitalist industrial states and the underdeveloped world, and partially offsetting those political benefits the Soviets have obtained from their accretion of military power. Moreover, they are acutely aware of the burden a hostile China presents as a second front. They therefore hope that the impetus provided to Sino-Soviet antagonism by Mao will slow as his era recedes, and that the Chinese leadership will come to be dominated by new forces desiring to conciliate the Soviet Union. The Soviet leaders do not expect in the foreseeable future to have a close relationship with Beijing, but they would like a calm one. They would greatly prefer to have borders with China that were mutually accepted and legitimized. As a means of broadening the relationship with China, they would like to expand the economic dealings which have been a minor factor for both countries for two decades.

13. In attempting to give life to these various wishes, hopes, and preferences, however, the Soviets remain greatly hampered by the Chinese memory of their past behavior toward China, and even more by the ongoing effects of present Soviet transgressions on Chinese interests, all of which tend to perpetuate Chinese hostility. Thus Soviet purposes are mutually conflicting. The Soviets appear characteristically in-

sensitive to the counterproductive effects of aggressively competitive behavior upon the bilateral relationship. Although many Soviets may in retrospect believe that Khrushchev made tactical mistakes in dealing with the Chinese in the early years of the dispute, the Soviet leadership is not inclined to question the legitimacy and appropriateness of the present Soviet behavior to which the Chinese object. Indeed, a principal goal of Soviet policy toward China appears to be to secure a "normalization" of bilateral relations under circumstances which, the Soviets hope, would imply tacit acceptance of the legitimacy and permanence of the Soviet geopolitical gains registered at China's expense.

The US Factor

14. The United States is a central consideration in the calculations of both Moscow and Beijing. China sees its developing association with the United States as the most important of its new bulwarks against the Soviet Union. The Chinese view this as a multipurpose relationship. They regard the United States as an important source of the capital and technology needed for the Four Modernizations, including, directly or indirectly, military modernization, and they see the US relationship as facilitating their increasing intimacy with Japan and their growing dealings with Western Europe. They probably interpret their Washington connection as supplying some increment of deterrence, however ambiguous, to Soviet military calculations about China, while also adding the possibility of leverage for Chinese diplomatic dealings with Moscow. In the absence of Western technological assistance for weaponry, China could only look forward to a continuing decline in military strength relative to the USSR. That might make it more difficult to maintain China's unyielding stance in Sino-Soviet relations. But the key factor will continue to be US resolve and ability to counter Moscow. Finally, the Chinese hope through their association with the United States to influence the United States and its allies to greater efforts to contain the spread of Soviet power and influence, just as some two decades earlier, at a time when they considered the United States their main enemy, they had sought to influence the Soviet Union to more vigorous efforts against the United States.

15. The Soviets see the present triangular relationship as highly unfavorable to their interests, and they are concerned that it may get worse. They are particularly exercised at the evolving security relationship

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emerging out of Sino-US normalization, and they see beyond this the specter of Sino-US-Japanese-NATO collaboration against the Soviet Union. The Soviets are unwilling to take into account the degree to which their own behavior may be impelling the United States toward Beijing, still less to offer Washington significant concessions to prevent such movement. They long assumed that, in the last analysis, the United States would itself consider its multitude of dealings with the USSR—particularly the many arms control negotiations—too important to jeopardize through close security alignment with Beijing, but they almost certainly no longer have high confidence in this assumption. The Soviets may now count increasingly on Washington's European allies, who the Soviets believe are more vulnerable to the consequences of a total cessation of detente, eventually to dissuade the United States from a close security association with the Chinese. Meanwhile, they would of course greatly prefer that China itself cease to desire such an association, and they are therefore prepared to explore various avenues that might lead to a Chinese change of heart, however pessimistic they are about the outcome.

The Japanese Factor

16. Because of geographical and historical factors and Japan's status as the third-ranking industrial power, the Sino-Soviet struggle for influence in Japan is second in importance for the two antagonists only to their contest over their relationships with the United States. In Tokyo, despite the importance of trade with the Soviet Union and the Japanese preference for maintenance of a nominal "equidistance" between Moscow and Beijing, the Soviets are in fact at a considerable disadvantage, which appears to have grown somewhat in recent years. The Soviets are handicapped in the first instance by Japanese cultural affinity for China and historically generated distrust for Russia and the Soviet Union. In addition, the Soviets believe themselves burdened by a pro-Chinese cast of US policy in Japan. Symptomatic in this regard was the signing in August 1978, with what the USSR believed to have been US encouragement, of a Sino-Japanese Friendship Treaty containing what the Soviets chose to regard as anti-Soviet overtones. This occurred despite a long Soviet diplomatic and propaganda campaign, which had in effect made this issue a public test of the relative influence of China and the USSR in Japan. More generally, the Soviets find the possibility of Japanese investment in certain of the largest projects once envisaged for Siberia obviated by

US unwillingness to participate. At the same time, the Soviets are concerned about the powerful long-term pull of the Chinese market upon Japan. They continue to display anxiety over the eventual effects of Japanese technological cooperation with China and to complain bitterly about the implications of growing Japanese military contacts with the Chinese.

17. These concerns have not prompted the Soviet Union to remove major irritants in Soviet-Japanese relations. In particular Moscow has refused to discuss the Japanese claim to the southern Kuril Islands, a claim that has been vigorously supported by the Chinese since 1964. In addition, the Soviets have persisted in an ongoing military buildup in the Far East generally, and on the disputed islands of Etorofu (Iturup), Kunashiri, and Shikotan specifically, which continues to evoke further Japanese concerns and resentments that are amplified by Beijing. This Soviet behavior is evidently motivated in large part by a desire to deploy forces in the southern Kurils to inhibit US naval entry into the Sea of Okhotsk while ensuring Soviet exit from Vladivostok in case of war. But as in the case of Soviet policy toward China, the inertia of conservative military considerations has thus far been allowed by Soviet policymakers to outweigh what may prove to be major long-term negative political consequences. The net effect of these policies has thus far been to further solidify the Japanese consensus underwriting the Japanese military alliance with the United States and to furnish additional tacit justification for the slow gravitation of Japan toward China as well as a gradual Japanese defense improvement.

18. On the whole, the structure of this quadrilateral relationship has thus far served to reinforce the inclination of dominant Chinese leaders to give no ground to the Soviets. The Chinese regard the US military presence in the Far East, anchored in the relationship with Japan, as an indispensable counterweight to Soviet military strength in the area. The existence of this presence probably serves in some degree to encourage Chinese willingness to remain intransigent in Sino-Soviet bilateral relations.

The Indochina Factor

19. In the last two years, another key variable has been introduced into the Sino-Soviet relationship by events in Indochina. From the Chinese perspective the Soviets have successfully sought to exploit Vietnamese conflicts of interest with China which had been submerged while the United States was present but

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which surfaced increasingly thereafter. Landmarks in this process were the Vietnamese entry into the Soviet Bloc Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CEMA) in June 1978 and the signing of a Soviet-Vietnamese treaty in November 1978, which prepared the way for the Vietnamese attack the following month that overran Cambodia and by January 1979 had displaced the Pol Pot regime allied to China. The Soviets doubled their military aid to Vietnam in 1978 and increased their economic aid to replace the supply of petroleum and grain canceled by the Chinese in May of 1978. Since the monthlong Chinese border incursion into Vietnam beginning 17 February 1979, the Soviets have more than quadrupled their annual arms shipments to Vietnam. In return, the Soviets have been allowed to stage naval air reconnaissance and antisubmarine warfare (ASW) aircraft from Da Nang and to make combatant visits to Vietnamese ports. Port visits facilitate extending the area of deployments for Soviet units, especially to the Indian Ocean, and provide the Soviet Navy with convenient staging points from which it can conduct surveillance of sea lines of communications, monitor US and Chinese activities in the area, and provide facilities for crew shore leave, replenishment, and repair without leaving the South China Sea area. Use of Vietnamese airfields expands Soviet aerial reconnaissance and ASW capability in Southeast Asian waters. Soviet ships, including combatants, have also called at Kompong Som.

20. The Chinese, for their part, sought through a sizable incursion into Vietnam in February and March 1979 to impress upon Hanoi the dangers implicit in flouting Chinese interests, and succeeded in increasing considerably Vietnam's military and economic burden. However, they were unable to deflect the Vietnamese from their course in Kampuchea, and their incursion not only failed to shake the Soviet-Vietnamese relationship but resulted in a substantial increase in the Soviet presence in Indochina. While Beijing is gratified by the negative reaction of ASEAN countries and many other states to Vietnamese and Soviet behavior, the Chinese remain concerned at the possibility that these states may feel obliged to come to terms with a Vietnamese fait accompli. They cannot, moreover, be certain about the long-term viability of Pol Pot's guerrilla struggle.

21. Even without erosion of the anti-Vietnamese diplomatic coalition, there is little doubt that both the Soviets and the Chinese believe that, on balance, a geopolitical shift has already occurred in the area as a result of events in Indochina, which for the time being

is at least partly detrimental to China. There is also little doubt that Beijing sees Soviet policy in Indochina as a genuine and irreconcilable challenge to Chinese national interests, and a major new increment to Chinese grievances against Moscow. A significant additional consequence of the new situation is the fact—for which China also holds the USSR responsible—that China for the indefinite future must now deal with hostile forces north and south.

The Afghan Situation

22. A further and still more recent complicating factor has been the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. There can be little doubt that here again both the Chinese and the Soviets believe that a shift favorable to Moscow has occurred. Despite Afghan distaste for the Soviet occupiers and continuing guerrilla resistance, Afghanistan is being transformed to satellite status. The balance of power in Southwest Asia has also been affected, with immediate consequences for China's major ally in the region, Pakistan. Psychologically as well as physically the Soviet "ring" around China has been extended, and the initiative in this volatile area now rests largely with Moscow. The Chinese, moreover, cannot afford to ignore the demonstration of Soviet "will" that Moscow's move into Afghanistan represents.

23. From China's point of view there are, however, a number of favorable aspects to the new situation. The Soviet action underlines and illustrates Beijing's warnings about the USSR's "hegemonistic" ambitions, which are now likely to be taken more seriously by the rest of the world. Soviet troops may become bogged down in extended fighting. India may see both the need and the opportunity to distance itself from the Soviet Union and improve its relations with China in an effort to prevent any of the other major actors from gaining a preponderant position in South Asia. The Muslim world's strongly negative reaction to the Soviet move, moreover, was doubtless gratifying to Beijing. Of at least equal consequence, in Beijing's eyes, has been the firmer anti-Soviet stance taken by the US Government, the accompanying indications of a change in public mood in America on key foreign policy issues, and evidence that Sino-US ties are likely to deepen and broaden—especially in security-related areas—in the wake of the Soviet action in Afghanistan. But the Chinese leadership cannot yet be certain how permanent the anti-Soviet mood is likely to be in the Muslim world, in the United States, or in Western Europe. The Soviet military presence in Afghanistan,

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on the other hand, appears likely to be long lasting. In short, the Chinese leaders are likely to conclude that the danger to Chinese security has increased as a result of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. They may conclude also that the political opportunities presented by the negative reaction to that event could offset, at least partially, this heightened danger.

The New Forum for Negotiations

24. A final factor added to Sino-Soviet interaction in the past year has been the creation of a new channel for negotiations. In April 1979, the Chinese gave the USSR formal notice of abrogation of the long-dormant Sino-Soviet Friendship Treaty of 1950, but simultaneously forwarded a proposal for talks—outside of and in parallel with the border negotiations—to address broad bilateral issues. Chinese willingness in 1979 to enter into such discussions, without the preconditions that had previously ruled them out, was probably at least in part a consequence of Chinese recognition of the dangers created by China's new two-front situation. At a minimum, China appeared to desire a new mechanism of negotiation whose very existence—even if no results were produced—might reduce tensions with the Soviets somewhat. In addition, the Chinese clearly also hoped that such negotiations might introduce fissures between Vietnam and the Soviet Union.

25. In fact once the first round of these talks was convened in the fall of 1979, China reasserted as a precondition for meaningful progress essentially the same sweeping demands it had formerly cited as a precondition to holding the negotiations. These demands the Soviets of course regard as unacceptable, as the Chinese had good reason to expect. The Soviet leaders may initially have hoped, on the basis of some ambiguous Chinese private statements in the spring, that the Chinese would take a less intransigent position in the negotiations, and would be willing to sign a general statement concerning principles of the relationship as a substitute for the expiring treaty. The Soviets may also have believed that some Chinese were tempted to accept such a statement because of a desire both to further reduce the possibility of military confrontation with the USSR and to expand Sino-Soviet trade. Although the Chinese proved intransigent and the initial round of talks ended without result, the Soviets do not appear to believe that Beijing's indefinite postponement of the second round of talks in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan means the discussions have been ruptured permanently.

III. FACTORS OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN CHINESE POLICY

26. On the other side of the ledger from the impulses toward continued conflict discussed so far are four broad areas of uncertainty that could make for change in Chinese policy. One concerns the political effects of recent changes and possible further changes in Chinese leadership and society; a second, the question of possible Chinese economic motives for improving the Sino-Soviet relationship; a third, new constraints on Chinese behavior as posed by China's new two-front problem and by the Soviet action in Afghanistan; and a fourth, the question of Chinese expectations about US and Western behavior. All four are to some degree interrelated and mutually contingent.

The Chinese Leadership Consensus and the Impact of De-Maoization

27. A central factor tending to promote some uncertainty about the future of Chinese attitudes toward the Soviet Union has been the dynamism and scope of Chinese policy changes since the death of Mao and the obvious accompanying tensions and latent fluidity in relationships within the Chinese elite. The pragmatism and eclecticism that have swept over much of Chinese social and economic life with the pursuit of the Four Modernizations have placed the remaining continuities of Chinese policy—and particularly the continuities of the posture toward the USSR—in sharp relief.

28. Associated with this have been uncertainties created by the gradual dismantling of Mao's personal reputation, the discrediting of his voluntaristic domestic aberrations such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, and the jettisoning of most of those ideological constraints on the tactical flexibility of Chinese foreign policy that remained at Mao's death. To the degree that the inflexible line toward the Soviets has been personally associated with Mao, it has necessarily required new justification in the eyes of some members of the Chinese elite. The rehabilitation of many of the former Chinese leaders purged by Mao over the years—some of whom at the time of their purge favored more moderate tactics toward Moscow than Mao—has further highlighted the issue of whether Chinese policy toward the Soviets is not now an anomaly in the total context of Chinese foreign policy. Finally, those small steps the post-Mao leadership has authorized to introduce a greater degree of civility in ordinary bilateral dealings with Moscow

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apparently have had the effect of encouraging some Chinese—including some in the Foreign Ministry—to advocate that China should go further.

29. We believe that these factors have a latent, rather than an immediate, importance. The departure of Mao from the scene has removed a personal dimension from the Sino-Soviet struggle, and the domestic changes that have followed his death have sharply reduced its ideological element, but these developments have placed in even higher relief the element that has underlain the conflict from the beginning: its geopolitical nature. Domestic political tendencies pushing for a relaxation of the conflict with Moscow would have meaning and would rise to the surface only in an appropriate geopolitical setting—specifically, a situation in which the Chinese leadership had serious reason to doubt the constancy or utility of the United States (and its allies) as a counterweight to the Soviet Union. In short, a domestic debate on the wisdom of reaching some degree of accommodation with Moscow would very likely be triggered by international developments; it would be much less likely to arise spontaneously from purely domestic factors.

30. Our understanding of how the arguments might take shape in leadership councils in Beijing is cloudy, but a few generalizations are possible. Some Chinese foreign policy experts—who are mostly not high-level policymakers—appear to believe that China has sacrificed flexibility and advantage in the Sino-US-Soviet triangle because of its unremitting hostility toward the Soviet Union. In their view, China could extract concessions from both Washington and Moscow by positioning itself more equally between the other two powers. More obscure, but probably more important, is a view that has occasionally been ascribed to some elements in the military establishment—that China, much the weaker of the two parties, cannot afford continually to offend the Soviets and must at least reduce the frictions and overt hostility with Moscow in order to avoid a conflict in which China could be badly mauled. We cannot be sure how widely or tenaciously this view is held, but we note that a version of it was advanced—perhaps for tactical reasons—by former Defense Minister Lin Biao shortly before his fall in 1971. This, of course, occurred while Mao was still alive.

31. Since the issue of how precisely to deal with Moscow is one that has bedeviled the Chinese Communist Party almost from its founding, we would not be surprised if argument on this subject became more

acute within the next three to five years. Although there is a certain plausibility in the two arguments noted above for resolving some Chinese differences with the Soviets, the arguments are not in themselves overwhelmingly compelling. Chinese diplomacy has made greater gains since 1971, when Beijing assumed its present position in the triangle, than at any time since the Communists came to power in China. Moreover, the Soviets, although holding most of the military cards, did not engage in major hostilities with China either in 1969 (at the time of the relatively minor border clashes) or in 1979 (when the Chinese attack on Vietnam presented Moscow with a *casus belli* if the Soviets wanted one). Above all, a significant change in the Chinese posture toward the USSR would result in a major wrenching of Chinese foreign policy in nearly all areas of the world, not to mention serious dislocations within the Communist Party in China itself. We suspect that these changes would appear so painful to contemplate that for many Chinese leaders they would in themselves be an argument against major realignment of the relationship with Moscow. Finally, we believe that even if Beijing were to explore in depth the possibility of a significant accommodation with Moscow, a close examination of the possibilities open to China might well suggest—as in the past—that any wide-ranging settlement of differences would occur largely on Moscow's terms, since the Soviet Union is much the more powerful of the two parties. Realization of this fact would very likely cause even some Chinese leaders who might have been prepared to contemplate a settlement to draw back.

32. In one other circumstance, differences of view on how to deal with the Soviet Union could result in significant policy shifts toward a conciliatory policy: a direct, immediate, and widely perceived Soviet military threat to China without sufficient offsetting international factors—which, as listed above, almost certainly would center on US behavior. Chinese behavior over the past decade suggests that Beijing has generally discounted such a threat from Moscow, and it obviously acted on this belief at the time of its attack on Vietnam last year. We think the consensus on this issue will continue to hold, although we are somewhat less confident on this score as a result of developments in Afghanistan. In any case, we believe that the lower the chances for a Sino-Soviet conflict, the less chance there is for a conciliatory change in Chinese policy toward Moscow.

33. Thus, we think the odds continue to run against a Chinese move significantly to compose differences

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with Moscow as a calculated act of policy. The odds shorten, however, if the elements in the current Chinese political equation were altered radically or if China were to enter another period of intense political infighting. Even in this case, however, geopolitical considerations would probably add weight to arguments raised for domestic political reasons. We do not, moreover, consider such an upheaval very likely. Mao's death has not eliminated the political strains engendered during the last decade of his life (nor have the economic and societal strains which long antedated him been eliminated), but the dislocations of his last years have led to a fairly widespread consensus among Chinese leaders that major political upheavals should be avoided, and steps are being taken to reduce the possibility of serious instability.

34. Even within the general framework outlined above there is considerable scope for differences of opinion about details, particularly on tactical issues or on questions which the Chinese consider of secondary importance. Such differences may easily recur in any Chinese leadership, and their effect on policy is likely to turn on both the distribution of influence in the leadership and the political and natural longevity of key individuals. It is therefore possible that during the period of this Estimate the Chinese posture toward the Soviets will be affected to some degree by the further evolution of the status of Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping. The Soviets have made it clear that they consider him the present driving spirit behind Chinese intransigence and the deepening relations with the West, and we are inclined to agree. However, although we suspect it is the case, we can offer no confident judgment as to whether other members of the leadership in fact have disagreed with Deng on points of policy involving the Soviets, or the nature and extent of any such disagreement. In any event, Deng's personal position was enhanced, and the likelihood that his policies would be carried on into the future increased, by the personnel decisions taken at the fifth party plenum in February 1980. Nevertheless, if Deng were to die in office, or genuinely "retire" even with a number of his close associates remaining in important positions, the absence of his personal authority would complicate the Chinese decisionmaking process. We see some possibility therefore that if Deng succumbs or loses a significant portion of his influence in the next three to five years, China could prove more ready to make a number of changes—relatively small and perhaps largely tactical in nature—in its behavior toward the USSR than it has been to date.

The Economic Arena

35. The economic relationship between Moscow and Beijing could be one such area of potential change. If other considerations could be disregarded, the need to conserve hard currency emphasized in the current Chinese economic readjustment would tend to make increased barter trade with the Soviets appear somewhat more attractive. It is nevertheless clear that there is a strong Chinese consensus behind the view that the planned further expansion of foreign trade under the new readjustment should continue to be oriented largely toward the West and Japan. There is also a widespread consensus in support of the judgment that the Soviet economy is unsuitable as a model for the new, pragmatic China. On both political and economic grounds few Chinese wish to ape the Soviets. Even fewer want to return to the dependent economic relationship of the 1950s, or to any approximation of it. Moreover, the Chinese are unlikely to be willing to expend hard currency for any Soviet goods, and difficulties are likely to be encountered in discovering a sufficient volume of Chinese goods acceptable to the USSR to balance such an accelerated growth of Sino-Soviet barter trade, as well as in agreeing on prices for both sides of this trade. At best, therefore, expansion of the barter relationship within the next few years is unlikely to grow much faster than the expansion of all of Chinese foreign trade, and thus the Soviets are unlikely to improve more than marginally on their present 2-percent share of that trade.

36. Of somewhat greater political importance, as a measure of how far the Chinese might be willing to go to "normalize" the bilateral relationship, would be the exchange of scientific and technical delegations and information. This was one of the issues raised between Moscow and Beijing in the summer of 1979 before Sino-Soviet bilateral talks began. We believe there is a chance that within the next three to five years the Chinese will agree to such exchanges, but we think the chance remains somewhat less than even. Of even greater significance—and political sensitivity—would be Chinese willingness to accept Soviet technical assistance once again, even in token amounts. The prospect of accepting Soviet expert advisers into China again after an absence of 20 years, however, would obviously touch a raw nerve in China in view of past experience, and we believe that there is only a remote chance that in the period of this Estimate the Chinese leadership would agree to take this step on terms the Soviets would find acceptable.

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The Two-Front Threat to China

37. The Indochina situation, with its many ramifications, is bound to influence Chinese perception of the relationship with Moscow. Beijing must, for example, consider the Soviet reaction to any further Chinese moves against Hanoi. The Chinese today are probably uncertain about whether circumstances will lead them again to become involved in large-scale fighting with Vietnam during the next three to five years. It appears reasonably clear that the Chinese would now prefer that this did not happen, and have no present intention of launching another major military attack on Vietnam, particularly since they must recognize that their costly attack in February-March 1979 did not effectively modify Vietnamese behavior in Cambodia, drew the Soviets more deeply into Vietnamese affairs, and resulted in a sizable increase in Vietnamese military strength.

38. The Chinese nevertheless probably believe that there are contingencies which might alter their assessment of the balance of benefits and costs in staging another attack. It is conceivable, for example, that the emergence of large-scale Vietnamese-Thai fighting as a result of Vietnamese cross-border incursions could be one such contingency, if the alternative facing China was the reorientation of Thai policy away from China to accommodate Vietnam.

39. In the event that the Chinese, for whatever reason, renew an attack on Vietnam during the period of this Estimate, they are likely to do so in the expectation that the Soviets will probably not offer a military response on the Sino-Soviet border at least until the Chinese attack threatens Hanoi. If the Chinese attack, they are likely again to adjust their goals to avoid crossing this threshold. Even if they suspected that the Soviets might not attack them even if Hanoi were endangered, they would probably consider this an excessive risk. They clearly believe that they calculated the Soviet response accurately in February and March 1979, and they probably assume that they could, if necessary, do so again.* They also probably believe that the Soviets remain reluctant to become involved in a war with China, although their confidence on this score may have been reduced somewhat by recent events in Afghanistan.

40. These considerations suggest that during the period of this Estimate, the Chinese are unlikely to

decide that their two-front problem and the possibility of further hostilities with Vietnam constitute a new and urgent reason to accept the sizable political costs of a settlement of the Sino-Soviet border issue. Indeed, the Chinese know that, if they were to accept a border settlement on Soviet terms, they would still face an undiminished Soviet military threat from the north. They would doubt that the chance of a Soviet military reaction to a Sino-Vietnamese conflict would be reduced even if a border settlement had been reached.

The Afghan Factor

41. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan will probably strengthen Chinese intransigence. Beijing's response to the Soviet action has been strong and has included the indefinite suspension of the new talks with Moscow. Indeed, to the degree that Soviet behavior in this instance has tended to fulfill dire Chinese prophecies regarding Soviet "hegemonism" it tends also to reinforce the conviction among many Chinese leaders that determined opposition to Soviet expansionism is the only viable course open to China. Few Chinese of any political stature are likely to be willing to ignore concrete Chinese interests that have been challenged by the Soviet military expansion into Southwest Asia—interests which are particularly important because they lie on China's periphery.

42. Thus, a consensus is likely to be maintained in the belief that what Beijing terms the Soviet "offensive" political and military posture in the world is so fundamental to Soviet policy as to be unlikely to be modified significantly by any but the most sweeping Chinese concessions. This judgment may be reinforced in Chinese eyes by the consideration that Moscow could well become bogged down in a consuming guerrilla war in Afghanistan—a development that would tend to sap Soviet energies, just as the Chinese believe the struggle in Kampuchea saps Vietnamese energy and material resources.

43. Although we think the odds favor the maintenance of this consensus view, we nevertheless think Soviet actions in Afghanistan could possibly have another effect. The Chinese have called this development the most important in Soviet policy since the Czechoslovak affair of 1968—an event which, coupled with the Sino-Soviet border clashes of the following year, caused China to reorient its international posture. We think the public linkage to Czechoslovakia in 1968 accurately reflects the Chinese view of the significance of the Soviet thrust into Afghanistan.

* For a discussion of our appraisal of the likely Soviet reaction, see paragraph 69.

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While this assessment tends to reinforce longstanding Chinese assumptions, if the Soviets were to crush the Afghan resistance, it could also lead to a review of longstanding Chinese assumptions that hostilities are not imminent. It is possible that some Chinese leaders, impressed by the Soviet action in Afghanistan, will infer that Moscow will be more willing to use force in future disputes. In this context these leaders may conclude that the situation is now more conducive to major hostilities that could involve China.

44. In a context of heightened danger the Chinese are likely to assess carefully the attitudes of the United States. In some respects they seem to believe that some initial US responses to the changing situation in Southwest Asia have been largely rhetorical and perhaps somewhat hasty—a situation that, in their view, could raise US-Soviet tensions without actually restraining Soviet behavior. If these views were sustained the Chinese could move to lower the temperature of their own quarrel with Moscow (reducing propaganda attacks, for example, resuming pro forma political talks, and eschewing provocative actions of their own) without actively moving toward reconciliation with the USSR. If, however, Beijing were to perceive signs that the West, and the United States in particular, were acquiescing in the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and were seeking to mute differences with the USSR, advocates of a more conciliatory approach to the USSR might be able to argue more convincingly that China too must buy a "breathing space." We think these outcomes less likely than reinforcement of current tendencies. But having emphasized the significance of Afghanistan as a test of willpower and determination to resist the Soviets, the Chinese to that extent are putting their anti-Soviet strategy to the test. In such circumstances, the international behavior of the West, and particularly of the United States as the main strategic counterweight to the USSR, is of particular importance.

Chinese Expectations of the United States and the West

45. Thus, the key area of uncertainty concerns Chinese expectations of the United States and its allies, and the consequences for Sino-Soviet relations if these expectations are disappointed.

46. We believe that the present Chinese attitude toward the USSR is influenced by the perception that China's bilateral relationship with the United States is rapidly expanding, and by Chinese belief that there is

a reasonable chance that the security aspects of this relationship will grow over time. But these expectations are likely to be tempered with caution. Almost certainly the Chinese leaders do not believe that the United States would now respond with military force to a Soviet attack on China; moreover, they may have grave doubts that the Sino-US relationship will develop over the next five years to a point where such a US response would become probable. Nevertheless, they are probably convinced that the evolution of circumstances which foster the maximum ambiguity and uncertainty on this point is greatly to their interest, since it complicates the Soviet calculus of risks and thus adds to their net deterrent. The perceived value of the United States to China in this respect will of course be influenced by the degree to which US conduct throughout the world adds credibility to the possibility that the United States would offer meaningful help to China.

47. For these reasons, as well as for the broader economic and political reasons cited earlier, there probably is a consensus of Chinese leadership favoring a closer security association with the United States. We believe that if other factors do not intervene to change radically the Chinese perception of the United States, the consensus on this point is fairly likely to remain stable. Most Chinese are unlikely to believe that the evolution of such a relationship would provoke the Soviet Union into attacking China—particularly if carefully managed. They are firmly convinced that the Soviets are both bullies, when the risks are clearly minimal, and realists, who will retreat if confronted by unattractive odds.

48. The Chinese have evident hopes that the further evolution of their relationship with the United States will produce a significant transfer of modern US weapon and military technology to China. Although the satisfaction or disappointment of these hopes will be an important factor shaping the Chinese attitude toward the United States over the next few years, it will by no means be the only factor, or even necessarily the most important one. Nor is this factor alone likely to have a decisive influence on the Chinese attitude toward the Soviet Union, which derives primarily from the totality of Soviet behavior affecting Chinese interests.

49. However, if Chinese disappointments over negative US decisions on key areas of concern to China—for example, the transfer of arms technology—were to be combined with significant disappointments in other areas of US behavior important to Beijing, this cumu-

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lately might suffice to undermine the credibility of the US statement in August 1979 identifying US security interests with the preservation of a strong and independent China. The Chinese regard this statement, made during Vice President Mondale's visit to China, as a benchmark against which to measure US policy. However, short of a decision that the totality of US behavior—toward China, toward the world, and toward the Soviet Union—was so deficient as to contradict Chinese interests across several broad areas, there is probably a considerable range of Sino-US relationships with which the Chinese could live without finding it necessary to alter their stance toward the Soviets.

50. We see three standards by which the Chinese will measure the United States:

- First, probably the most important expectation the Chinese have of the United States is that it will maintain its geopolitical function as the essential and effective world counterweight to the Soviet Union. This means, above all, the preservation of the US technological and military position vis-a-vis the USSR. The Chinese will therefore remain especially sensitive to trends in the US strategic balance with the Soviet Union, as well as to trends in the US conventional force posture, particularly in the western Pacific. Beijing is also likely to regard as especially important Washington's ability to maintain its ties with Western Europe and, even more, with Japan.
- Secondly, the Chinese wish the United States to so conduct itself as to minimize the likelihood that the Soviets will continue to expand their influence incrementally, particularly in areas near the periphery of China. The Chinese probably believe that the US ability to contain the growth of Soviet influence remains hostage to difficulties and potential discontinuities in US domestic life. The Chinese are likely to perceive the US foreign policy consensus as having been fragmented in the last 15 years, the authority of the US executive branch as having been gravely weakened, and the will of the United States to act as having been placed in question. Under earlier circumstances, the Chinese found these phenomena reassuring, as evidence that the United States was a receding threat to China; now they find them regrettable. Although they may now perceive some different trends in embryo, they probably nevertheless regard the fu-

ture stability and effectiveness of US policy as still uncertain. Chinese confidence in the United States is likely to be adversely affected—and Chinese readiness to cooperate with US policies eroded—to the degree that Beijing perceives tendencies of instability, vacillation, and infirmity of will persisting in US policies, particularly if quick changes in policy were to leave China more exposed to danger.

The Chinese are likely to regard the perceptible erosion of US influence in various Third World countries as a result of local factors, apart from Soviet efforts to exploit them. This may strengthen the Chinese view that visible collaboration with the United States would in many cases be counterproductive to China's own interests, including that of minimizing Soviet influence. But this conclusion in itself is unlikely to translate immediately into greater Chinese readiness to conciliate the Soviets. However, to the degree the Chinese perceive the Soviet Union likely over time to make incremental advances as a direct or indirect result of US misfortunes, their apprehension of the Soviets will be reinforced.

- Thirdly, the Chinese wish the United States to give major weight to Chinese interests in choosing US policies, and minimal weight to Soviet interests. The Chinese are well aware of the existence of differing currents of opinion in the United States regarding the appropriate US posture toward China and the Soviet Union. Although they are likely to be fairly flexible in adjusting to specific US policies, they will remain acutely sensitive to any evidence of a more general US retreat from a policy of helping to strengthen China's overall position against the Soviet Union. But they would be especially aggrieved—and consequently more likely to review basic assumptions about the Sino-Soviet-US triangle—if they concluded that US actions favorable to China were ephemeral, and subject to modification in exchange for concessions from the Soviet Union.

51. On the whole, the Chinese are probably fairly confident that objective circumstances—in particular, the momentum of Soviet policy—will inhibit a US return to a detente relationship with the USSR of a kind that was widely presumed to exist during the early 1970s. But the Chinese are probably somewhat less sure that the US and West European perception of

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particular interests requiring interaction with the Soviets will remain consistent with Chinese interests. They are aware that, unlike China's significance to Japan, China is still a relatively minor factor for much of Western Europe, where security and trade relationships with the USSR and Eastern Europe are much more important. The Chinese may be especially concerned over the future evolution of West Germany, whose perceptible coolness toward China they have probably interpreted as symptomatic of particular vulnerability to Soviet leverage. Nevertheless, present trends in European behavior toward the Soviets probably will not significantly affect the Chinese posture toward the USSR unless radical changes ensue. In particular, any Western agreement with the USSR, tacit or explicit, which was perceived by Beijing to facilitate Soviet transfer to Asia of a significant portion of the Soviet forces or weapons in Europe would be interpreted by the Chinese as a development requiring reexamination of Chinese behavior toward the Soviet Union. Over the period of this Estimate, however, the Chinese probably consider this contingency remote.

IV. STATIC AND DYNAMIC FACTORS IN SOVIET POLICY

52. Over the next few years, Soviet concern over Sino-US cooperation against Soviet interests is likely to grow, and the Soviets are likely to continue to wish, in principle, to be able to conciliate Beijing. Because the greater portion of Soviet competitive efforts on the world scene will still be directed against the United States, the stronger and global antagonist, rather than China, the weaker and regional one, the Soviets will continue to hope to better their relationship with China and thus improve their position in the triangle. They would thereby reduce the inclination of both their adversaries to use Sino-US association as a source of leverage on Soviet policy.

53. The present Soviet leadership is likely to remain unwilling, however, to pay an important political price to Beijing to accomplish this. As in their dealings with the United States, so with China, the Soviets will probably continue to refuse to accept "linkage." That is, they will not be willing, for the sake of the bilateral relationship, to forgo seizure of geopolitical opportunities which injure the interests of the other party unless they are sure of compensation that they consider of overwhelming importance. They

thus appear unlikely, for example, to abandon support of Vietnamese ambitions against those of China without, at a minimum, the advance compensation of extremely large, indeed radical, improvements in the Chinese posture toward the Soviet Union. Minor Chinese changes almost certainly will not suffice.

54. If, however, the Soviets conclude over the next several years that the United States and China are developing a close security relationship, Moscow's perception of its China problem—as well as of the worldwide balance of forces—might shift considerably. We think it likely that the pace and scope of this relationship and cooperation would be crucial in coloring Moscow perception of such a development. The Soviets would grumble over a relatively gradual growth in a Sino-US security relationship but would probably adjust calmly to new "realities"; a rapid development of the relationship, on the other hand, would almost certainly appear more threatening to Moscow. This effect would be intensified if Soviet leaders were to conclude further that their basic military superiority over China was being significantly eroded, partly because of Sino-US military cooperation. In view of the fact that the military gap between the USSR and China is still expanding rather than diminishing, we believe the Soviets are unlikely to reach this conclusion unless US military technological aid to China is carried to great lengths. But if the Soviets did perceive an adverse trend developing in this military balance, we think that their response would emphasize pressure and threats rather than conciliation of China.

55. In the absence of fundamental changes on the part of the Chinese, the Soviets will try to get Beijing to agree to more modest bilateral improvements while refusing to abate the competitive policies—in Vietnam and many other places—to which Beijing objects. Thus far, in the talks with the Chinese begun in 1979, the Soviets have found themselves frustrated in this effort by the Chinese insistence on such linkage, as well as by the Chinese demand for military disengagement by the Soviets so extensive that both sides know it will never be considered by Moscow. The Soviets have not abandoned hope, however, that a changing world "correlation of forces"—a shift in the Chinese perception of the utility of the United States as a partner, and an extension of de-Maoization to Beijing's USSR policy—may eventually alter this Chinese position. In that event the Soviets are probably prepared to make bilateral concessions to Beijing in matters they consider secondary.

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The Economic Relationship

56. The bilateral economic relationship is one sector where such future Soviet initiatives could occur. The USSR in past years has on a number of occasions vainly tendered proposals that the Chinese resume the whole-plant purchases halted since 1960, sign long-term trade agreements, and agree to the large-scale return of Soviet economic experts and advisers to China; and there is fragmentary evidence to suggest that the Soviets may have revived the issue of Soviet technical assistance to the Chinese coal industry during the summer of 1979. The Soviets may have erroneously concluded that Chinese interest in greater trade with the USSR was sufficient to create Soviet leverage in the political negotiations which began in 1979. Instead, the Soviets ultimately found in these negotiations that the Chinese leaders would not agree to improvement in the economic relationship without unthinkable prior Soviet military concessions.

57. Despite this impasse, we believe that there is a substantial chance that during the next few years the USSR will resurface economic proposals to China without Soviet prerequisites. The Soviets evidently assign great weight to the difficulties China has experienced in assimilating Western technology, and they may believe that there is a significant body of Chinese opinion that considers a major expansion of Sino-Soviet economic dealings likely to be economically beneficial to China. We think it probable that the Soviets overestimate the extent of such sentiment. We therefore think it likely that the Soviets in the next few years will find occasion to revive proposals for trade expansion, long-term trade agreements, and technological cooperation.

The Range of Possible Soviet Military and Border Concessions

58. On issues relating to the border negotiations and military deployments, future Soviet flexibility will be even more severely constrained, chiefly because the USSR must confront specific Chinese demands already on the table which define the framework of discourse and which the Soviets consider inimical to their vital national interests:

— Within the period of this Estimate, we foresee virtually no chance that either the present Soviet leaders or their successors will yield to the Chinese demand for total Soviet military evacuation of all the "disputed areas" as a prerequisite for a border settlement.

— However, it is possible that the Soviets would offer China minor concessions as face-saving inducements if they were to conclude this would induce China to retreat from its rigid negotiating position. The Soviets could reiterate previous offers to accept some very minor adjustments of the Sino-Soviet border, provided these were reciprocal, and provided that they did not involve claims which the Soviets consider nonnegotiable for strategic reasons, particularly the claim to the key island of Heixiazhi, near Khabarovsk.

59. We also consider it extremely unlikely that either the Brezhnev leadership or its heirs will in the next few years accept the Chinese demand for the unilateral withdrawal of all Soviet forces from Mongolia and the reduction of Soviet forces in Asia to the level of the early 1960s as a partial price to be paid in advance for an overall improvement in Sino-Soviet relations. Indeed, we believe it improbable that the Soviets would seriously consider even commencing a reversal of the prolonged military buildup in Asia opposite China until far-reaching prerequisites had been satisfied. These would probably include, at a minimum, the achievement of a border settlement satisfactory to the Soviet Union and a radical modification of the Chinese posture of global political hostility toward the USSR.

60. Even under these hypothetical greatly changed circumstances, it would probably be difficult for the Soviets to begin a reduction of their forces opposite China if the Chinese remained hostile to a Vietnam allied with the Soviet Union and if the possibility of Sino-Vietnamese hostilities remained. However, in the unlikely circumstances that Moscow believed there was the near-certainty of a radical improvement in Sino-Soviet relations, it might pay the inevitable price of impaired Soviet-Vietnamese relations.

61. We also believe it conceivable that, if the Soviet leaders perceived a significant possibility of imminent radical change in the Chinese attitude toward the Soviet Union, they might be willing to hold out to the Chinese the prospect of some future concessions regarding Soviet forces opposite China. In this unlikely event, the Soviets might suggest that appropriate changes in Chinese policies—including, but not limited to, Chinese agreement to what the USSR considered a reasonable border settlement—would eventually be followed by some reduction of Soviet forces in Asia. Even such a limited and conditional offer might be controversial in the Soviet Union, and, at best, any such hypothetical offer would almost cer-

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tainly fall far short of what the Chinese have thus far been demanding. In particular, we foresee virtually no chance that any Soviet leadership under any circumstances would be willing to remove all Soviet forces from Mongolia, whose defense is considered essential to that of the Soviet Union.

62. In short, there is only a limited range of conceivable Soviet concessions to China in the border and security realm. Significant concessions in this area are improbable, even when predicated upon prior Chinese concessions of a scope which is itself highly improbable.

The Momentum of Present Deployments

63. In fact, Soviet deployment is moving steadily in the direction of increased strength and capability. The number of Soviet divisions deployed against China, and the quality and quantity of their equipment continues to grow in Mongolia as well as the USSR. Exercises for forces already facing China and those out-of-area forces evidently intended as potential reinforcements were conducted in 1979 on a much larger scale and more realistic manner than heretofore. Also it appears that a new higher level command echelon has been created to command some, and perhaps all, of the military districts opposite China, with a prestigious senior officer installed as commander. This new command may be second in importance in the Soviet armed forces only to that of the Warsaw Pact command. There are also indications that in regard to one important strategic weapon system now being deployed—the SS-20—the Soviets appear to have decided upon an unusual equality in the allocation of resources against their Chinese and Western opponents. The force structure confronting the Chinese adversary has thus been made more nearly comparable in form, scope, and political significance to the structure opposite NATO, although the size of the forces allocated to Asia is, and is likely to continue to be, less than that deployed in Europe.

64. We cannot be certain what force goals the Soviets now envisage achieving in Asia within the three-to-five-year period of this Estimate. We have reason to believe, however, that the Soviet leadership within the past three years decided on further significant ground force and air force improvements (including some force reinforcements) in the not too distant future, in particular for the Transbaikal Military District and Mongolia, the subject of the most bitter Chinese complaints about Soviet deployments. We

believe that some, although not all, of these expected improvements in units and materiel have by now been effected, and that more are likely to appear during the period of this Estimate. In addition, the Soviet Pacific Fleet continues to be upgraded with the newest classes of submarines, surface ships, and ASW aircraft. It is expected that the newest Soviet naval strike aircraft (Backfire) will be deployed to the Far East during the same period.

65. The Chinese response to these changes is likely to be measured. In the wake of the border clashes of 1969, China shifted a considerable number of troops northward, and withdrew others from the south and east into a central reserve. Although the border clashes precipitated this realignment of forces, the Chinese moves were a readjustment to the entire Soviet build-up along the border to that time; it probably would require an augmentation of similar scope of the Soviet side of the border for the Chinese to undertake a new large-scale redeployment of their own forces. Beijing may have altered slightly its pre-1979 deployment pattern to meet the continuing and long-term threat from Vietnam on its southern border, but this added strain has not affected deployment of Chinese forces in the north. They remain in greater number than the Soviets facing them, stationed well back from the border, and armed with the best equipment in the Chinese inventory—which of course is no match for the Soviets in firepower or mobility. The Chinese Navy's capability to respond to the Soviet Navy's buildup and presence in the Far East will remain minimal throughout the period of this Estimate.

66. We believe the continued strengthening of Soviet forces facing China flows from a confluence of factors. As the capabilities of Chinese forces are improved, the Soviets remain determined to continue to outmatch them, and to be seen as doing so, at every stage up the ladder of escalation. As the possibility that the Chinese may acquire Western military technology grows, conservative Soviet military planners tend to strive to offset this eventuality long before it has reached fruition. With the evolution of Soviet military technology, and the coming into being of new weapon systems, the forces in Asia automatically benefit. And as the military development of the Soviet Far East proceeds, the size of the military forces deployed in the area will also grow over the long term. Finally, as the Soviets perceive their political interests in East and South Asia to be growing—as has visibly occurred in Indochina and Afghanistan—they are inclined to increase the weight of their military presence in the area

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as a means of tacit pressure upon their Chinese rival. In sum, the Soviets are impelled to reinforce the Chinese border not only as a deterrent, but also to provide them with the capability to carry out offensive operations if necessary.

The Chances of Soviet Military Initiative

67. We continue to believe that despite the growth in Soviet military capabilities the uncertain outcome of any conflict with the Chinese argues against any premeditated attack on China unless severely provoked. The nature of what may constitute provocation in the Soviet mind is itself in flux, however, and will be considered below. Meanwhile, the Soviets remain sensitive to a variety of deterrent factors:

- As to strategic nuclear attack, the Soviets are likely to continue to perceive as unacceptably high the likelihood that any such Soviet strike at China would leave the Chinese with an unlocated or undestroyed residual capability with which they would be able to attack and destroy some Soviet cities.
- As to conventional ground attack more serious than limited border skirmishes, the Soviets are likely to continue to find the prospect of unending engagement with the Chinese probable and discouraging. Although present Soviet forces in Asia are probably sufficient to defeat the Chinese locally and overrun northern Manchuria or Xinjiang, the Soviets are unlikely to believe that they could eliminate Chinese resistance or to visualize clearly how they would end such a war. The Soviets are likely to attach great weight to the unpredictable consequences of indefinite involvement in a land war in Asia against an opponent of China's size, population, and reputation for implacability and tenacity.
- As to a border engagement, the Soviets are likely to think that such limited action would not provide sufficient pressure on Beijing to cause it to modify its policy. Border skirmishes would not permit the Soviets to do serious damage to Chinese military forces, but would nevertheless risk an escalation which Moscow could not be sure it could control.
- In addition, the Soviets will continue to consider the probable highly adverse political consequences for their relations with Asia and the West to be an important consideration. Although

the adverse consequences for relations with the United States in particular might be somewhat less important for the Soviets than formerly because of the recent deterioration of Soviet-US relations, even this would be of some importance.

- Moreover, that the United States is establishing a measure of security cooperation with China raises the possibility of US military involvement. Even if the Soviets judged this to be only a slight probability, it would nevertheless add to Soviet uncertainty, and thus to deterrence.
- Finally, the Soviets in the period of this Estimate will continue to be acutely aware that hostilities with China would probably further poison the Sino-Soviet relationship for many years to come. They would have little hope of maintaining a cooperative Chinese regime in any area not firmly held by Soviet troops. Far from bringing about the creation of a favorable government in China, such hostilities would make it politically impossible for Chinese authorities controlling the bulk of the Chinese population and landmass to adopt a conciliatory stance toward the Soviet Union for the foreseeable future. Although the Soviets do not at present have great expectations for a favorable evolution of attitudes in the Chinese leadership, they have sufficient hopes for change over time to give them reason to be reluctant to cast these hopes away without great provocation.

68. There are circumstances, however, in which the Soviets would be forced to weigh all these factors against opposing considerations. Not all such circumstances carry an equal order of probability. We would rate as a rather low probability, for example, a scenario in which Moscow contemplated an attack on China as a result of a train of events in which China had threatened India with attack as a result of Indian efforts to destroy or heavily defeat Pakistan. Another relatively unlikely scenario could arise out of Soviet concern over the implications of military ties between Washington and Beijing. We consider Soviet hints that Moscow would act decisively if future dealings between the United States and China crossed an unspecified threshold to be largely saber rattling for short-term effect. But in a situation in which the Sino-US security relationship was growing rapidly, the Soviets might consider accepting the costs of striking at the weaker link in the nascent tacit alliance. In any event we think that Moscow's response would probably

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include intensified military preparations in East Asia—and these would probably occur before the Soviet leadership felt it necessary to review the option of using force against China, either to preempt Chinese military improvements or to meet a perceived Chinese challenge in a sensitive area such as Indochina.

69. Sino-Vietnamese conflict is in fact the contingency which has the most serious potential for causing Moscow to consider in detail the factors favoring military action against China. In the event of a Chinese attack on Vietnam these factors would grow more important to Moscow in proportion to the seriousness of the Chinese threat to Hanoi or to the viability of the Vietnamese regime. We believe that there is a fair likelihood that the present Soviet leadership would again refrain from any military response on the Sino-Soviet border if it were inclined to believe that the Chinese intended to penetrate no further into Vietnam than they did in 1979. If the Vietnamese forces were decisively defeated and the Chinese appeared likely to go farther, however, the Soviets would be most reluctant to accept the political costs of allowing their ally to be humiliated, the fait accompli in Indochina to be reversed, and the Soviet deterrent against China to be discredited. We believe there is at least an even chance that under these circumstances, the present Soviet regime would eventually take some military counteraction against China. If time permitted, this would almost certainly be preceded by steps designed to induce the Chinese to halt and withdraw, such as warning messages and military demonstrations. If time did not permit, however, the Soviets could be led to act more rapidly. All these considerations suggest that, depending on the evolution of circumstances, there might be considerable scope for miscalculation by both sides about the ultimate intentions of the opponent.

The Soviet Succession Variable

70. These and several other contingencies for Sino-Soviet relations may also be affected by the fact the Soviet leadership is likely to experience a significant change in membership during the next three to five years. General Secretary Brezhnev, Premier Kosygin, and possibly several others in the aging Politburo may be replaced. A large number of factors whose ultimate effects cannot be predicted—including, for example, the order in which different leaders succumb—will interact to determine the shape of the succeeding leadership. The foreign policy inclinations of the

successors will also be affected to some degree, and perhaps significantly, by major Soviet economic problems whose consequences will increasingly affect decisions during this period. In addition, personal considerations which have little to do with Soviet national interests, such as the ambition, political adroitness, and degree of opportunism of various contenders, will also probably have a major effect on the emerging consensus in all policy areas, including that of policy toward China.

71. It is possible that such a successor leadership will be primarily concerned, at least during the period of transition, with ensuring internal stability by minimizing the likelihood of external disturbances and adventures. If so, this would increase the likelihood of new Soviet overtures to the Chinese intended to procure a reduction of tensions without significant Soviet concessions. In this case, new Soviet offers to improve the economic relationship would be marginally more likely.

72. For the reasons discussed in this Estimate, however, we do not believe that a successor Soviet leadership will find it possible to go beyond the limited and highly contingent concessions to China on border and force disposition issues described earlier. Moreover, these hypothetical concessions are themselves marginal possibilities, to which what may be a new, weaker, and more divided Soviet leadership than the present one may find it even more difficult to agree.

73. At the same time, the successor leadership may value an image of constancy, and may find it even more difficult than has the Brezhnev leadership to resist policy choices which flow from existing initiatives, choosing not to believe that such an approach may ultimately lead to greater risks. This tendency may be furthered by a continuation of the visible growth in the prestige and influence of the Soviet military establishment, on whom the new General Secretary may be increasingly dependent.

74. These considerations widen the area of uncertainty relating to interplay of factors bearing on the future of the Sino-Soviet dispute, but in the absence of a clearer picture of the Soviet succession and of the circumstances in which it will occur, we cannot say with certainty whether this factor will increase or decrease the odds that in the future Moscow will take somewhat greater risks in response to perceived Chinese provocation. We believe, however, that our uncertainty on this score will be shared by the Chinese,

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and to the degree that it therefore raises the risk of Chinese miscalculation, it may marginally increase the risk of Sino-Soviet military conflict as well.

V. PROSPECTS

75. The interplay of the factors and variables considered in this Estimate appears most likely to produce the following results over the next three to five years.

76. Resolution of the impasse in the Sino-Soviet border negotiations is unlikely, particularly since the Chinese continue to insist that movement in this area precede rather than follow a general rapprochement. It is very improbable that the Soviets will begin to reduce their military dispositions along the border and in Mongolia as China is likely to continue to demand, and probable that these dispositions will instead continue to be improved.

77. On balance, we believe there is only a small chance of Sino-Soviet hostilities during this period. This chance could be somewhat increased in the event of a new Chinese attack on Vietnam, which we consider possible but not probable, and would increase further thereafter in proportion to the depth and persistence of the Chinese assault. However, the possibility that these variables will cumulatively net out differently is considerable. The likelihood of Sino-

Soviet military conflict thus will reflect a high degree of uncertainty over the next few years.

78. The Soviets will almost certainly persist in their support of Vietnamese ambitions in conflict with perceived Chinese interests, will continue their military presence in Afghanistan, and will very probably continue military and political activities in many other places throughout the world and around China's periphery, which will reinforce Chinese fear of a growing Soviet geopolitical threat. Chinese antagonism toward the Soviet Union will, on balance, not decline, although arguments about how best to deal with the Soviet threat could arise in China. On balance also we believe China will continue to demand far-reaching and unacceptable prerequisites from the Soviet Union for any notable improvement in the relationship, as these demands are a result, rather than a cause, of the antagonism.

79. In the event of important changes in the US posture toward China or the Soviet Union favorable to the Soviet Union and adverse to China, the likelihood of which is outside our consideration, the Chinese leadership might make some concessions to the Soviet Union that would otherwise be unacceptable. The extent of such possible concessions cannot now be judged; we believe in any event that they will be a function of the Chinese assessment of how immediate is the threat China faces from the USSR.

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